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Diversity, Culture, and Bicycling, Blog 1

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SPIN CITY 2015

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Brittany Baker

A SNAPSHOT OF THE UCI ROAD CHAMPIONSHIPS RICHMOND 2015

SEPTEMBER 25, 2015



Martin's Food Market preparing for UCI Road World Championships with official gear.



The calm before the storm.



Keep calm and race on!



VCU's lovely foot bridge on W. Franklin

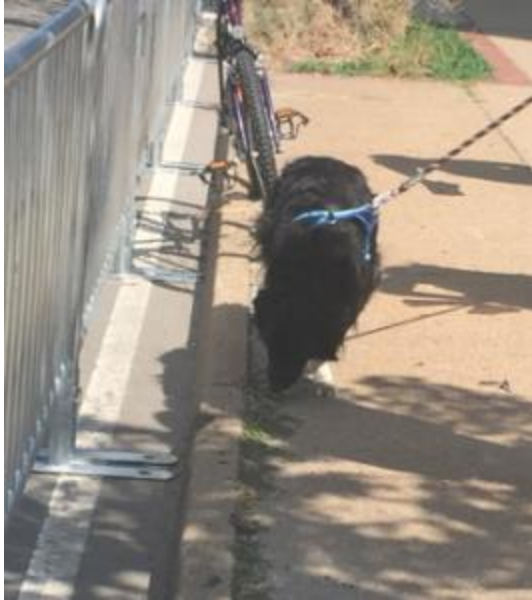




Walking over the foot bridge.



Portuguese competitors.



One of the many dogs brought along to watch the excitement.



Lithuanian competitors.

NINE DAYS OF LEARNING

SEPTEMBER 25, 2015

While I was watching the Union Cycliste Internationale Road Championship during the week of September 19th-29th 2015 I noticed a large amount of diversity. There was diversity present in the cyclists as well as the crowd. It was extremely interesting to see all the different teams representing a multitude of countries during the race. It was further interesting to experience various cultures while spectating the races.

The diversity within the competitors has been quite great. While viewing the races I saw riders from nineteen different countries. To name a few of these countries: Norway, Kazakhstan, Israel, Portugal,

Spain, Italy, Ecuador, Canada, Greece, the United States of America, and Lithuania. Within a few hours I was able to see people from all walks of life, backgrounds, countries, and who speak different languages than I do. One thing I would like to note is that the form of the competitors seemed to be the same. While they were all so different from each other, they maintained focus, determination, stamina, and the same position while racing. From the place I was able to view the social construct of race of the competitors. However, I did notice a lot of Caucasian bikers.

The second component of diversity within this event is that of the crowd. While watching the bike race I heard about a dozens different languages. I heard English, Spanish, Russian, and Portuguese. In addition to these languages spoken by the crowd I heard various dialects of English. I was able to hear a few speakers of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) and also the Northeastern Boston accent. It's quite possible that I heard various dialects of the other languages. Additionally, I noticed the behavior of the members of the crowd varied. For example, many Americans would cheer and shout things such as "Woo!" or "Yea!" as the bikers zoomed by. American spectators would also bring noisemakers like cowbells to sound when the bikers passed them. Across the street from me I noticed a few people wearing t-shirts in support for Spain. I did not notice them cheering as Americans did, they seemed to simply clap in encouragement. It was an interesting observation.

Furthermore, another facet of the crowd I would like to point out in observation is that many members of the audience brought their dogs with them. I saw about thirty dogs in one hour whose owners were watching the race. One woman even allowed her miniscule Chihuahua to run under the fence panels along the route. Perhaps it is of bicycle culture for spectators to bring their four-legged friends along since it is a social and outdoor event.

Richmond has been extremely fortunate to have been able to host an event as prestigious and impressive as the UCI Road Championship. An international sporting event such as this has been quite eye-opening and full of diversity and learning. I am very proud that my city was able to host this widely diverse event and do so smoothly. While watching the race, I kept thinking how interesting it is that all of the people beside me as well as those racing in front of me are so diverse in every facet. We are different in our gender, race, the languages we speak, the culture we most identity with, our age, out sexual orientation, and many other considerations. Yet, we are all brought together during these traffic detours, international cooperation, sweat, and tears of the Union Cycliste Internationale Road Championship.



An American competitor.



An Ecuadorian competitor.



A Norwegian competitor.



A Canadian competitor.



A Kazakh competitor.



A Greek competitor.

REFLECTIONS OF CYCLING CULTURE

SEPTEMBER 25, 2015

After viewing some events of the Union Cycliste Internationale Road World Championships of 2015 in Richmond, I feel that there most certainly is a particular culture of cycling. I think that in order to be successful in the sport you need to have money or have been fortunate enough to have sponsors with money. Like many things in this world, cycling flourishes on money. There are five Fortune 500 companies that are able to sponsor and partner with Richmond 2015 for this large, international event. They are Anthem, Altria, Genworth, Dominion, and Carmax. To me that signifies that there is a lot of money involved in cycling. Another component to the cultural and financial aspect of cycling is the

presence of expensive cars. The cars I observed were Lexus and BMW. These are the cars that follow the cyclists for security purposes. Another component of the culture of cycling regarding money is that one of the competitor's bicycles was stolen. The bike's value was marked at a little over \$10,000. On another note, before the races started I noticed a man dressed in some very tattered clothing riding his own bike to stake out a place before the race began. He is probably what people think of as the exact opposite of what the "usual" cycling spectator would be. Once he found the perfect spectating spot, I could not help but notice how exciting he looked. He was positively beaming with excitement for the race. As I noticed that I thought about how this is a direct reflection of the United States of America. Often times it seems that those with money try to exclude those with little to nothing from participating in the same activities. Through these few observations I made it seems that there is a definite cultural aspect involving money in cycling. I think this culture of cycling reflects that of the United States of America, as money is a huge component in so many aspects of this 21st century culture.

Furthermore, regarding diversity of cycling, I noticed a tremendous amount. As I was observing the races, at any given moment I was hearing three languages, and in a crowd that seemed to reflect a nation from the six most populated continents. It was a very cool experience. I believe this culture of cycling is a direct and best example of the culturally diversity of the United States of America in the 21st century. I say this because the experience I felt while spectating did not seem new or unique; I experience moments in crowds like that all the time in this country. That is the beauty of the diversity of the U.S.A., especially in Richmond. I can walk down the street on any random given day and hear multiple languages and meet people from cultures much different from my own. I think that Union Cycliste Internationale Road World Championships of 2015 is a direct mimic of the diversity within the United States of America. However, this diversity is brought to a much larger scale and perhaps that is what people living in this country should one day expect and hope for.

IS OBLIGATORY DIVERSITY ACTUAL DIVERSITY?

SEPTEMBER 25, 2015

Prior to viewing "The Wheelman: Cycling Literature and News" edition from 1892-1893 I was expecting to see little to no diversity in the images. Even in the modern day, over one-hundred years later, magazines tend in the United States of America do little to diversify their spreads, volumes, etc. For instance, magazines geared toward a female audience and reader are typically filled of glossy pages of thin, white, often times blonde females. However, for argument's sake, there may be a Latina or an African American woman randomly included, to claim the magazine's "diversity." However, is diversity for the sake of obligation actual diversity? I tend to not think so, whatsoever. The concept of diversity does not function that way.

Upon looking through "The Wheelman: Cycling Literature and News" I felt that my prior assumption regarding diversity was being upheld. Most of the images are of white, able-bodied males, and many are

young. I also noticed a lot of various styles in men's facial hair in the magazine. On page nineteen there is a profile portrait image of a young white woman. As the magazine progresses into the second year of the first volume, 1893, there are five consecutive images of the same man. He too is young, white, able-bodied, and is sporting that interesting mustache. Even in the images that show many people, the crowds are full of, what appears to be, only white people. I did not that there are a few women included, a tiny amount of diversity, but it is present. Finally, on page 122 there seems to be some degree of variation in diversity regarding age. There are two men shown who seem to be older, yet they are white. Then, lo and behold on page 140 there is a black male. It took the illustrators, editors, etc. an entire 140 pages to include a minority. One of the first things I noticed about the depiction of this black male is that he seems to be at work. He has some sort of gardening tool. I suppose for that time period, that is what is to be expected. Then, in section nineteen of the magazine there is an entry about an elderly man. This older man is seated by a hearth in two images and unsurprisingly, he is a white.

While today there is still lack of representation of minorities in magazines, I am thankful to say the United States of America has made progress. It would not take that many pages to feature a minority. While "The Wheelman: Cycling Literature and News" technically did feature some diversity, it was very slight and what I was expecting. However, if this was obligatory diversity, was it truly diversity or a way to fill some sort of checklist of things to include in a magazine? After all, true does not function that way. Perhaps the diversity of magazines in the United States has progressed but only in the sense that there seems to be a larger obligation to include diverse images of people in those magazines.

DIVERSITY LIVES HERE: LET'S KEEP IT THAT WAY

SEPTEMBER 25, 2015

Does diversity really matter? Why would it matter to you, the reader of this blog post? Does diversity benefit everyone? Does it even benefit anyone in general? Why do educational institutions place such great emphasize on being diverse? (Virginia Commonwealth University certainly prides itself in being as diverse as it truly is.) Is this whole diversity craze a fade or is this here to stay?

These are all questions I have heard in classes at Virginia Commonwealth University, on television, on the radio, and in print. These questions are revolved around diversity, it's meaning, and what it entails. Is really is a term that is often thrown around. Despite a lot of opinions of people who do not embrace diversity, it is a beautiful thing. It should be embraced with open and welcoming arms. I think that here in the United States there are often times a thought of worry when it comes to the country becoming more diverse. I have heard argument that a more diverse United States of America means the loss of the American culture, customs, and traditions. However, the point of the need of the U.S to be diverse is so that we can learn from others. We need diversity so that we can learn other languages, and along with those languages, various dialects. Also, it is important so that we learn other traditions, behavior, and customs.

Embracing diversity breeds learning. This specific type of learning, in tandem with understanding and an open mind, breeds cooperation. Also, this type of learning expels ignorance and allows people to become citizens of the world. As Michael Gavin points out in his Ted Talk, entitled “Why cultural diversity matters,” “When we are talking about cultural diversity, we’re talking about thousand of ways of seeing the world.” Diversity allows a person to relate better to the world and the other inhabitants within the world, those they are sharing the planet with for this brief amount of time. Diversity is knowledge; it is a vital tool that every person should be constantly sharpening. No matter how many languages one speaks, how many countries one travels to, the thirst to learn more and embrace diversity and various cultures needs to be cherished.

All nations, cultures of present and past, are like pieces of a puzzle, we are all part of a very vast puzzle. This puzzle is incomplete without each and every last piece. No matter how miniscule and seemingly insignificant. Without that tiniest piece, it would be missing something. It would not be complete. We need to fight for the preservation of this puzzle and along with that, the fight for each and every piece. Meaning we must fight for each and every culture, nation, group, ethnicity, language, dialect, etc. Our puzzle of diversity is important so that we can learn from others’ mistakes and their success. We, as humans and as players in the future of mankind, should be looking to other nations and people for the way they solve problems so that future generations can be prepared and full of knowledge.

WHAT IS CULTURE? HOW ARE WE AFFECTED BY IT? WELL, HOW ARE WE NOT?

SEPTEMBER 25, 2015

The definition and the way the term culture is defined according to the person in question and depends upon the person at hand’s experiences. People from all different backgrounds and walks of life place high value, medium value, and low value on particular characteristics involved in their culture. For instance if a country whose culture places a high value on patriotism would certainly be likely to have people proud to be of that particular nationality. In other cultures there is low value place in drawing a great deal of attention to oneself. Where it is better to blend in and go through life without making a big deal about certain things.

Culture is such a fluid concept that it is difficult to place a true, universal, and definite definition upon the term. The concept of culture can be different for every person due to their personal experiences, family background, traveling, reading, education, and many other factors. For instance I embrace my American culture. I was born in Fairfax, Virginia and have lived in Richmond since I was two. My family and I participate in the very culturally American events, foods, entertainment, etc. We also participate in the widely popular individualism associated with the West, specifically the United States of America. As

Sabar Safdar notes, individualism is about the I in scenarios. In my experience, school and activities such as sports seem to about have placed a great deal on the individual, even while being group activities.

Furthermore, I do think there is a definite sports culture in the United States of America. In my experiences in the schools I attended, sport participation was as valued as making good grades. Those who played sports had instant friends in their teammates, role models in the older players, and mentors in the coaches. Students were encouraged to play at least one sport during the school year and those who performed above average were always highlighted. The star of the team was always glorified, emphasizing the I and not the we. Also, I think when some students realize they will not be professionals they may seem to give up. Perhaps the reason why sport culture in the United States of America is so popular is that dream that athletes have of making it to the professional level. There seems to be a focus on the glory the I can have instead of the goodness activity does for the body.

On another note, I think that sports for females are not regarded as highly. Even in the documentary "U.S. Sports Culture" the emphasis for women's sports was seemingly nonexistent. I think that is a direct reflection of the culture of the United States of America. In my experiences women's sports suffer from the lowest audience attendance, even in the women's event I attended for the Union Cycliste Internationale, there was a lower rate of attendance. Also, in my experience, women's sports received lower funds, lower in participation, school support, etcetera. Perhaps that is where questions should be asked and where school systems need to attack sports culture. The American culture has a specific ideal for how a woman should be, which is clearly not athletic or competitive. What can administration do to encourage female athletes to participate? What will it take for women to value sports for themselves and not as just a social event?